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Copy No. 24 of 190

## INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

CONSTRUCTION OF W-CLASS SUBMARINES  
IN SHANGHAI AND WU-HAN

Declassification review by NIMA/DOD

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Research and Reports

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CONSTRUCTION OF W-CLASS SUBMARINES  
IN SHANGHAI AND WU-HAN

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The priority accorded by Communist China to the strengthening of its naval capabilities is revealed from accumulated photographic coverage showing the renewal in [REDACTED] on a significant scale of its submarine construction program. Before the withdrawal of Soviet assistance in mid-[REDACTED] the Chinese had assembled more than 20 W-class torpedo-attack submarines at the Chiang-nan Shipyard in Shanghai and the Wu-chang Shipyard in Wu-han. It is now clear that since [REDACTED] the Chinese have been engaged in new programs entailing an increasing domestic effort and support from China's own shipbuilding and related industries. Production of a G-class ballistic-missile submarine at Dairen and a construction program involving about six new W-class submarines\* at Chiang-nan and Wu-chang since [REDACTED] reflect the high priority that is being allocated to construction of submarines. This publication discusses the W-class submarine program and concludes that Communist China now may be capable of constructing about two W-class submarines every 15 to 18 months. There is no indication, however, of the probable duration or ultimate size of the W-class construction program.

1. Chiang-nan Shipyard

The renewed program for construction of W-class submarines at the Chiang-nan Shipyard in Shanghai has been confirmed from photography of [REDACTED]. This shipyard was the major facility involved in the production of W-class submarines during the period of Soviet assistance. Analysis of photography since [REDACTED] reveals that the current program in Shanghai thus far includes three submarines. One of these probably has been completed during the fourth quarter of [REDACTED] the second is in an advanced stage of construction, and the third now is in an early stage of assembly. The current program utilizes two of the four shipbuilding ways formerly used in production of the W class. The photography of [REDACTED] clearly shows a W-class submarine on one of these two shipbuilding ways. The second way was empty, but hull sections for an additional submarine were present at the head of the two ways.

\* The external details of the submarine hulls discernible in the photography indicate that they almost certainly are W-class torpedo-attack submarines, although the possibility that they are an improved version of the W class (R class) cannot be entirely ruled out. In this publication these submarines will be referred to as W-class submarines.

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Analysis of earlier photography reveals that in [REDACTED] hull sections for two submarines, similar to the sections present in [REDACTED] were located at the head of or adjacent to the two building ways. No submarine or any other ship was being assembled on either way at that time. Photography of the yard in [REDACTED] revealed a vessel, probably a submarine, under construction on one of these ways. Because of cloud cover, the other way could not be observed. On the photography of [REDACTED] several objects were located at the head of the ways but because of haze could not be identified. Photography in [REDACTED] showed a probable submarine on each of the two ways. One of these is believed to be the same unit as that observed in [REDACTED]. The other unit, because it was somewhat shorter, probably was a second submarine in a very early stage of assembly.

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The next available coverage, in [REDACTED] revealed that one of the submarines on the ways in [REDACTED] had been launched. Moreover, a W-class submarine was in the fitting-out area of the yard. No submarine sections were observed at the head of or adjacent to the shipbuilding ways in the yard in the photography of [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Photography in [REDACTED] again revealed a probable submarine on each of the two ways. One of these is believed to be the same unit as that identified as a W class in the photography of [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The other unit probably is the third submarine in an early stage of assembly.

**2. Wu-chang Shipyard**

A parallel construction program for W-class submarines also has been underway at Wu-chang Shipyard in Wu-han. Preliminary analysis of photography indicates that this program is similar in scale to that observed in Shanghai and that it began about the same time. In the photographic coverage of [REDACTED] there is one W-class submarine on one building way in a relatively advanced stage of construction and a second submarine on another way in an earlier stage of construction. Both submarines had been launched by [REDACTED] and one is believed to be alongside a fitting-out barge. Moreover, photography of [REDACTED] revealed a possible submarine, presumably the third unit in the program at this shipyard, on a third building way, but the other two ways were empty.

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- 2 -

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3. Prospects

During the period of Soviet assistance, W-class submarines were assembled and fitted out in about 16 to 18 months, and about 50 percent of this time was spent on the building ways. Observations of the current construction, particularly in Shanghai, [REDACTED]

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The evidence concerning these programs, together with that on the G-class submarine built at Dairen, indicates that the Chinese have made considerable progress in developing a domestic capability in construction of submarines since the withdrawal of Soviet assistance in mid-[REDACTED]. There is no direct evidence, however, to indicate how much material supplied earlier from the USSR has been assembled in the W-class submarines constructed since [REDACTED] and how much the Chinese have provided themselves. When the USSR withdrew its assistance, the Chinese had assembled and completed an estimated total of 17 W-class submarines from Soviet materials and components. In addition, they had launched four submarines for which all of the necessary components for completion apparently had not been received. It is believed that the Chinese constructed the missing components, permitting the completion of these submarines by early [REDACTED]. The

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Analyst: [REDACTED]

Coord: [REDACTED]

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- 3 -

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